



After decades of pushing nations to surrender more power to Brussels, the European Union is about to throw in the towel on one highly contentious issue: genetically modified foods.

On Tuesday, the European Commission will formally propose giving back to national and local governments the freedom to decide whether to grow crops that many Europeans still call Frankenfoods.

The new policy is aimed at overcoming a stalemate that has severely curtailed the market for biotech seeds in Europe for years. Only two crops, produced by Monsanto and B.A.S.F., are sold for cultivation here.

The new flexibility is supposed to open up markets in countries like the Netherlands, where governments are broadly favorable toward growing and trading biotech products, while countries like Austria, where the products are unpopular, can maintain a ban.

But far from celebrating, the growing global industry, as well as some farmers themselves, is extremely wary of the new approach.

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